

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1 to 45 without prejudice and amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1 to 45 (canceled).

46. (currently amended) A method for producing ~~a blank for~~ an optical member of quartz glass, said method comprising:

providing ~~a said~~ blank which includes a contour portion for the contour of the optical member to be produced and an overdimension portion that has a surface which is defined by a lower side, an upper side opposite said lower side and spaced apart therefrom, and an outer edge extending around a center axis, and

subjecting said blank to a thermal treatment; and

subsequently cooling the blank, wherein measures are provided which, during cooling, keep heat conduction in an area adjacent said outer edge lower than in an area adjacent around said center axis;

removing the overdimension portion so as to expose the optical member.

47. (original) The method according to claim 46, wherein the measures comprise use of a preform as said blank wherein said overdimension portion includes a thickened portion which extends from said outer edge towards said center axis, said thickened portion varying in thickness so that the distance between the lower side and the upper side in an area adjacent the outer edge

is greater than the distance between the lower side and the upper side in an area of said center axis.

48. (original) The method according to claim 46, wherein the measures comprise introducing said blank into a vessel having a removable upper side and a lower side opposite said upper side and spaced apart therefrom, and an outer edge connecting upper side and lower side and extending around a center axis, said upper side, said lower side and said outer edge defining an interior of the vessel receiving therein said blank, said upper side and said lower side have a higher thermal conduction in an area of said center axis than in an area adjacent said outer edge,

filling intermediate spaces between said blank and said vessel with SiO_2 powder, and subjecting said blank surrounded by said SiO_2 powder in said vessel to a thermal treatment by introducing said vessel into a furnace and heating and subsequently cooling the vessel.

49. (new) The method according to claim 47, wherein the distance between lower side and upper side across said thickened portion decreases continuously inwardly towards said center axis.

50. (new) The method according to claim 49, wherein said distance decreases faster than linearly relative to inward position on the blank.

51. (new) The method according to claim 49, wherein said distance decreases linearly relative to inward position on the blank.

52. (new) The method according to claim 47, wherein said thickened portion begins at said outer surface.

53. (new) The method according to claim 49, wherein said thickened portion begins at said outer surface.

54. (new) The method according to claim 47, wherein said thickened portion extends from said center axis to said outer surface.

55. (new) The method according to claim 49, wherein said thickened portion extends from said center axis to said outer surface.

56. (new) The method according to claim 47, wherein said thickened portion is adjacent the upper side and a second thickened portion is provided adjacent the lower side, both of the thickened portions being thicker outwardly of the blank than in the area of the center axis thereof.